

# Houseplant Care

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## The Basics

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Houseplants can be a beautiful addition to a home or office. They are often grown for their attractive foliage and flowers. Plants naturally make us feel good, improve air quality and relieve stress! The key factors for plant growth are light, temperature, humidity, water and fertilizing.

**Light:** Light is essential for plant growth and can be one of the most limiting factors for success with houseplants. Both the amount and the quality of light are important.

- **Low Light:** North window: a few feet away; East/West window: 3-10 feet away; South window: 15-20 feet away.
- **Medium (average) Light:** North window: directly in front; East/West window: a few feet away; South window: 3-10 feet away.
- **High or Bright Light:** East/West window: directly in front; South window: up to 5 feet away.
- **Direct:** South window: directly in front.

**Temperature:** Most foliage plants prefer day temperatures between 65 and 75 degrees with night temperatures usually 5 to 10 degrees lower. Avoid extreme temperature changes, such as air blasts from windows, window panes, radiators, heating and air conditioning vents.

**Water:** Overwatering tends to be the most common mistake when caring for houseplants.

- Light, temperature, humidity, container type, container size, and finally soil type all influence the speed of growth and therefore the amount of water needed.
- Apply water when the top 1 to 2 inches of soil are dry. Measure this by pushing the index finger about 1 to 2 inches down into the soil.
- Soil moisture cannot be determined by sight, except when a plant is wilted.

**Humidity:** In winter, most homes have less than 30% humidity and some houseplants may suffer. Humidity can be increased with a humidifier or misting them by hand. Another technique is to group plants together, which improves the humidity immediately surrounding them.

**Fertilizing:** Frequency of feeding can vary from biweekly to bimonthly during the growing season. A general rule for application frequency is fertilizing at half the recommended strength, every 2 weeks from March to September. Most houseplant fertilizers are fairly concentrated. Never exceed the recommended application amount. Oftentimes, applications should be even more dilute than recommended. Label recommendations are based on the ideal conditions in greenhouses.

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